



A boy and his book

The 8-year-old descendant of one of the **world's greatest writers** takes on the **family trade**

By Pamela Smith Hayford

Robert Jon Hemingway Rothenberg. It's a mouthful, for sure. But the family history behind this 8-year-old author packs a lot of potential.

Robbie is the great-grandson of the legendary writer Ernest Hemingway. His mom, Mina Hemingway, is the granddaughter, her father the son, of the Nobel Prize-winning writer (Ernest, not Robbie — yet).

Mina owns Mina Hemingway Florida Bookstore in North Naples. Robbie's dad, Jon, runs Prestige Printing; Jon's father was a designer and artist.

Robbie's first book, "Adventures While I Sleep," comes out in major bookstores this month. It's already available at his mom's bookstore.

Still, Robbie is a pretty typical kid.

The youngest of four boys, he starts third grade at Pelican Marsh Elementary this year. His favorite subject is P.E.; he loves Legos and "Star Wars."

And, "He's got a tremendous arm," says his dad.

On the sweltering summer day that we met him, Robbie looked totally cool in his Montana State T-shirt, khaki shorts and blue Crocs.

Inspired by his great-grandfather's



"The Old Man and the Sea," Robbie's tale is about a boy who falls asleep and dreams of an oceanic adventure.

It's fitting that his first book — which he plans to turn into a series — is about adventure. In addition to his great-grandfather's adventurous life, he has grown up hearing his grandfather's stories of Cuba and Key West and his mother's stories about living in Africa at the foot of Killimanjaro. (Robbie's next book, he reveals, will be about a boy whose adventures start in Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and take him on a dream journey into Africa.)

The first story sprung from silly banter between Robbie and his dad about a year ago. Robbie was making up stories based on funny titles, such as, "If My School Was Chocolate, I'd Eat It." As the stories developed, so did Robbie's interest in writing.

"I said, 'Are you serious about writing a book?'" Jon Rothenberg recalls. "Because I thought it would be good with my wife's history... We thought it would be a fun project."

Robbie readily says he had help on the book from his mom, dad, brothers, his teacher (Sue Tracey at Pelican Marsh) and his principal (Dr. James Gasparino).

"We need to work with a team," Robbie says. "You always get everything accomplished with a team."

What does Robbie want to be when he grows up?

"A cop," he says. "Dad was a medic."

"Show 'em your badge," he adds, his face lighting up. "Show 'em, Dad — I want to see it again."

Dad reluctantly pulls out the badge.

Wouldn't you want to be a writer? "I am a writer." ☺

THE BOOK

■ "Adventures While I Sleep" by Robert Jon Hemingway Rothenberg, 8, of Naples is a children's adventure story illustrated by The News-Press editorial cartoonist Doug MacGregor. For independent readers ages 6-8 and listeners as young as 3. Available soon at major bookstores and at Mina Hemingway Florida Bookstore in North Naples.